

DIVISION OF LABOR

DOMESTIC WORK.—Such domestic industries as spinning, weaving, and the manufacture of pottery, bark cloth, and bead ornaments are female occupations. Tailoring is, however, frequently in the hands of the men, some of whom even make the clothes for their wives. The preparation of food is strictly reserved to the women, the men never condescending to do any cooking, except while away from home. The barbecuing of the chase is, however, the work of the men.

FIELDS.—The husband prepares a patch of the forest for the making of a plantation, by cutting down the trees and cleaning the ground by burning; but the care of the field, that is the planting, weeding, and reaping of the crop, is left to the women.

OTHER OUTSIDE OCCUPATIONS.—The manufacture of fishing and hunting implements, and of canoes and accessories thereto, are man's work. The women fish with the hook, but all other methods of fishing are reserved to the men. The latter fell trees for firewood and cut them into convenient lengths to haul, but the females have to fetch and split it. The woman goes to the waterside to bring the game which her husband has killed and brought in his canoe, but she never accompanies him on the actual hunt, being unacquainted with the handling of hunting weapons.

LOAD CARRYING.—The carrying of heavy loads is usually left to the women. For this purpose they use a carrying strap, known by the local Spanish name "bombador" or "bambador." The latter consists of a narrow strip of bark cloth, both extremities of which are attached to the burden. The load is first lifted on the back with the assistance of another person and then the pack strap is put around the forehead. The male Indians do not carry anything in this manner, but they secure the package to the back with the aid of shoulder straps, as do the Ladinos. The Spanish-speaking women, however, carry loads generally upon the head, as is the case with the negroes of both sexes. When very tired the Indians give a sort of whistle to catch their breath (M.: *wiika pabbaye*; T. & P.: *wiika wupdenia*; U.: *wiika wupdenaka*, lit.: "to blow the breath").

DAY LABOR WORK.—In former days many young Miskito, living to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios, went annually to British Honduras to work there in the mahogany or logwood camps. They left about May and returned in November or December. During this time the settlements on the coast were practically without male inhabitants, except for the boys and old men. The women then had to subsist on fish, crabs, oysters, cockles, the eggs of alligators, turtles, and iguanas, and vegetable food. Now all these Indians easily find work in their own country, either in the mahogany camps or in the

462

462
482464
[484]

[262]

444 gold mines; or they work as paddlers on the rivers, which are practically the only means of communication.

[511] The Sumu, on the other hand, are more timid and less enterprising. They are unwilling to leave their wives and children for a length of time in order to work for the benefit of the white men. Besides, even to this day, their wants are few, and they can easily do without practically any article of foreign manufacture. Formerly, however, many of them were active as rubber bleeders, but owing to East Indian competition, the export of that commodity from the Mosquito Coast has stopped altogether.

TRADE AND BARTER

438 INTERCHANGE OF COMMODITIES.—Among such rude hunting and fishing tribes as the Miskito and Sumu only a very restricted trade can have existed in former days. The rivers, lagoons, and the sea were practically the only means of communication, and this is still the case. The interchange of commodities was generally effected by barter. [436] The Miskito appear to have also employed beads of sea shells as money, while the Sumu of the interior used cacao beans for the same purpose.* We are told by M. W. (304) that these two tribes, which were continually in a state of hostility, observed a truce on appointed days; they then met on an island in the lower Rio Coco for the purpose of trading.

556 These Indians live under an almost perfect equality, and there are no rich or poor among them. They do not strive to accumulate wealth, and the great unwearied exertion, found among our civilized societies, is unknown among them.

317 FORMER ARTICLES OF BARTER.—The Miskito used to evaporate salt from the water of the sea and lagoons and collect pretty sea shells suitable for beads. 438 These commodities were exchanged with the Sumu for pottery, cotton goods, hammocks, bark cloth, and rough canoes.

484 During the latter part of the seventeenth century, and for many years following, the Miskito undertook daring sea voyages as far south as Chiriqui Lagoon in Panama, and occasionally even beyond that region. These expeditions were, however, not organized with peaceful trading in view, but for the purpose of stealing cacao from [721] the Spanish settlers at Rio Matina (Costa Rica), and capturing Indians to be sold to the English traders of Jamaica.

439 PRESENT-DAY COMMODITIES.—Nowadays the Indian's wants from the outside world are many. The Miskito, who are less primitive than their neighbors, were already in commercial relations with

* According to G. N. Collins (see Safford in Smithsonian Report for 1916, p. 421) this use still persists in the Mexican State of Chiapas.

53/ them. White thread and small needles (M.: *silak*; T., P.: *silip*;
[439] U.: *akras*, from Spanish "aguja") of foreign manufacture are employed to string the beads.

NAVIGATION AND CANOE MAKING

● 484 Travel is effected chiefly by canoe, for there are hardly any roads in the country outside of the hunting trails; the numerous navigable rivers intersecting the country form, together with the lagoons and the sea, the means of communication.

The Miskito inhabiting the immediate seashore from Cabo Gracias a Dios on southward are excellent seamen; they were already noted for their courage on the sea by the buccaneers (Ravenau de Lusan: 440). The Miskito living to the north of that settlement, however, navigate the lagoons and rivers, and rarely venture on the sea. The Indians living inland, on the other hand, are afraid of the sea and of the large lagoons, but they are perfectly at home in the bush, and they are very expert in navigating the river boats through the dangerous falls and rapids.

491 BRIDGES.—The liana bridges, which are met with in other parts of Central America, are unknown on the Mosquito Coast. The Miskito and Sumu occasionally make a crude bridge over a narrow creek by felling a tree across it. Canoes are used everywhere for the crossing of the streams.

501 TYPES OF CANOES.—Two sorts of dugout canoes are used on the Mosquito Coast. The "dori," or keeled canoe, is used to navigate the sea and lagoons, while the "pitpan," or flat-bottomed canoe, is employed on the rivers. The sea canoes are fast sailers, but somewhat "cranky." All these boats are hollowed out by means of the adze; the largest specimens, cut out of the solid tree, without any addition, may reach up to 5 feet beam and 40 feet in length.

PITPAN.—The "pitpan" is a long narrow boat with flat bottom, drawing but little water; it is therefore particularly fitted to navigate the shallow creeks of the interior which abound in rapids and falls. It glides noiselessly over the water and is easily steered, but it is very cranky and the slightest motion renders it liable to upset. It is therefore of no use on the sea. The pitpan has a square projecting bow and stern, like a small platform, large enough for a person to stand on. A hole is made in the bow through which a pole is thrust perpendicularly in the ground, to moor at river banks or at shoals. The pitpan is very thick bottomed, and for that reason may sustain very rough handling in hauling it over the rocks at rapids and falls.

The name "pitpan," which is in general use among the English-speaking population of eastern Central America, is taken from the Miskito word *pítas*, which means plaited. It is claimed by some

were dying out rapidly, which may account for the lower figure now given. The Rama tribe, of about 200 members, living along the lagoons near Bluefields, has become a sort of *alun* population; its existence on the edge of the rough seaport village subjects it to the whims and volition of all and sundry. From the Río Tinto northward live the Black Cariba, descendants of the aborigines of St. Vincent Island. In and about Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, San Juan del Norte, and on the islands, the inhabitants are largely mulattoes; Negroes as well as mulattoes are also found in the coastal towns.

MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MISKITO AND SUMU

142 The Miskito Indian is generally well built, of middle height whereas the Sumu Indian is rather thickset and of lower stature. Both are proportionally broad shouldered, have deep chests and are heavy muscled. Schultz²² found the average measure of the adult Sumu and Rama to be 1.5816 m. It is also obvious to any observer that the arm and chest muscles are developed somewhat out of proportion to the leg muscles. This may be due to the fact that these people are essentially canoe (pipante) folk whose chief method of travel consists of river boating. In fact, most of their enterprise is carried out by the use of a boat and the use of arm and torso muscles any exceed those of the lower extremities.

144 In our studies at Wasparam and Saulpuca the weights and heights were noted in a series of individuals with reference to their age. It is apparent that diet plays a role in development²³ but since it will be shown later that the nutrition of these people is adequate in the light of present day criteria, the figures reveal presumably the inherent constitutional morphology of surface area. And since the changes in height and weight vary with the age of the individual it is important to take this factor into account.

It is to be noted that the figures are averages and do not reveal variation. Since the major part of growth occurs between birth and twenty years of age²⁴ the values given represent the peak of surface area development and the initial phases of further weight gain. However, measurements are no better than their definition and the indivi-

²² Palmer, C. E. Growth and the economic depression. Pub. Health Reports. 1934, 48, 1277-1292.

²³ Krogman, W. M. The Growth of Man. *Tabulae Biologicae*. 1941-42, 20, 1-967. Junk, Den Haag, Noderlands (delayed in press because of war).

²⁴ Krogman, W. M. Human Growth. *Ciba Symposia*, 1943, 5, 1458-1485.